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ABSTRACT

This brochure is intended to serve the following three purposes: (1) To provide Environmental Education Division (EED) managers and staff with a common understanding of EED's mission and goals, the underlying values held as fundamental to EED activities, and specific priorities necessary for making day-to-day operating decisions; (2) To provide a vehicle for EED's management to discuss the direction of planned activities and, in coordination with other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) planning efforts, to lay out a clear strategy for the future; and (3) To provide internal and external organizations and entities a better understanding of EED's mission and direction for the coming years. The five goals of the EED are: (1) stimulate communication, innovation, and partnerships; (2) educate and motivate youth to protect and preserve our environment; (3) promote the pursuit of environmental careers; (4) develop an environmentally conscious and responsible public; and (5) reach across international boundaries. (MKR)

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Environmental Education– Outlook For The Future

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Environmental Education– Outlook For The Future

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Environmental Education Division (1707)
401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20460

"Environmental education is an important new initiative at EPA. However, widespread improvements in environmental literacy require a unified commitment from government, business, environmental organizations and educators alike to increase the quality of our environmental education initiatives."

Carol M. Browner, Administrator
June 1993

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Purpose of Brochure

This brochure is intended to serve the following three purposes:

- To provide Environmental Education Division (EED) managers and staff with a common understanding of our mission and goals, the underlying values we hold as fundamental to our activities, and specific priorities necessary for making day-to-day operating decisions.

- To provide a vehicle for EED's management to discuss the direction of planned activities and, in coordination with other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) planning efforts, to lay out a clear strategy for the future.

- To provide internal and external organizations and entities a better understanding of EED's mission and direction for the coming years.

Background and Legislation

Environmental literacy is an educational trend of the 1990s. To address the need for environmentally literate citizens of all ages, backed by a skilled workforce with environmental expertise, Congress passed the National Environmental Education Act* (the Act). This legislation builds upon efforts previously undertaken by EPA and establishes formal communication and advisory links with educational institutions and other Federal Agencies. Specific provisions of the Act to be implemented by EPA include the following:

- Establishing an Office of Environmental Education within EPA;

- Establishing an Environmental Education and Training Program for the purpose of developing educational materials and training educational professionals. This program is administered by a consortia of institutions of higher education through an annual grant awarded by EPA;

- Awarding environmental education grants to support projects that design, demonstrate, and disseminate environmental education activities and techniques;

- Awarding internships for college students and fellowships for in-service teachers to provide them the opportunity to work with professional staff of Federal agencies involved in environmental issues;

- Providing for National awards recognizing outstanding contributions in environmental education;

- Establishing both an Environmental Education Advisory Council and a Federal Task Force to provide forums for communication and collaboration, and to provide guidance to EPA on matters related to the Act; and

- Establishing a National Environmental Education and Training Foundation that will encourage private contributions to promote environmental education activities, further the development of environmental awareness, and work with foreign entities to coordinate educational activities that address environmental issues in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

As described in detail in below, the EED has now implemented the Act. From its inception, the design of the EED environmental education agenda has emphasized the creation of links with existing networks of environmental educators, environmentalists, and students. In short, if the activities of the new office are not directly useful to these constituencies, then there is little rationale for their pursuit. In addition, the energies of all sources—Federal, state, academia, professional associations, industry, and public interest organizations—are needed to meet the challenges ahead. Only through cooperative efforts and partnerships will the EED be able to coordinate and accelerate the development and implementation of sound environmental education programs that satisfy the expectations of both EPA and Congress.

* Public Law 101-619, November 1990, 20 USC 5501-5510

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Mission Statement

The primary mission of the Environmental Education Division is:

To advance and support national and international environmental education efforts to develop an environmentally conscious and responsible public, and to inspire in all individuals a sense of personal responsibility for the care of the environment.

To effectively accomplish this mission, EED must collaborate with many internal and external organizations which share responsibility for its achievement. EED will work with program offices at EPA headquarters and regional offices, the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, academia, Indian Tribes, organized professional and public interest groups, business, industry and the public-at-large.

EED Responsibilities

The role of EED is to:

- Provide leadership and guidance by developing a strategy for the future of environmental education and by communicating priorities in environmental issues;

- Facilitate communication among all involved and provide networks for information and resource sharing to minimize duplication and to maximize the use of limited resources;

- Facilitate the identification of gaps and inconsistencies in environmental education resources and encourage strategies to eliminate them;

- Support the Nation's environmental education efforts, especially those at the grassroots level; and

- Act as an advocate for environmental education efforts nationally and internationally.

Critical Issues Assessment

The seriousness and complexity of environmental problems require fundamental shifts in approaches to solutions. The traditional "end of the pipe" strategy is not sufficient; the EED will pursue a new approach that emphasizes sustainable development, pollution prevention, and the need for an enhanced environmental ethic among all segments of the public.

The ultimate success of this new approach will be greatly influenced by the public's understanding of the seriousness of many environmental problems, and the role which each individual can play in abating or eliminating the problems. The challenge is a dual one—creating an environmental literacy and ethic in our youth so that they approach environmental problems responsibly throughout their lives, and raising the level of environmental awareness of adults, to enable them to make informed decisions to support the shift to a vision of sustainable development and pollution prevention which are critical to addressing today's problems.

It is encouraging that students themselves see a great need for more effective, comprehensive environmental education. Two independent surveys cited in a 1991 Renew America Report, contained the following figures:

- 89% of incoming college students identified the environment as their top social concern.

- 90% of United States high school students said they do not know enough about environmental issues.

- Only 17% of these high school students said they had learned anything about the environment in their classes.

- 84% of these high school students said they would take action to improve the environment if they had more information about what to do.

These findings make it clear that environmental education as it has been conducted thus far has not met its enormous challenge. Most children welcome a better understanding of the interdependence of the natural world and human societies. To develop a responsible and environmentally aware citizenry, educators must not only understand environmental issues, but be able to communicate the necessity to reconcile advancing technology with the realities of global limits.

Goals and Objectives

The EED has developed five goals—general statements of what the organization must accomplish to achieve its mission. The goals are not listed or ranked in order of importance or priority, but rather in an order facilitating comprehension of this plan. Below each goal are the strategies that describe EED's overall approach to achieving its mission and goals. The third tier of information contains the activities that are the specific actions and tactics that have been or will be undertaken to achieve the realization of the strategies and goals.

GOAL 1: Stimulate Communication, Innovation, and Partnerships.

STRATEGY A: Expand Communications with Environmental Experts.

There is a broadly experienced cadre of environmental educators, which is well versed in the extensive research and literature of the field. Formal communication and advisory networks with these educators and other external environmental professionals are being established and supported to ensure that the EED receives the benefit of the most comprehensive expertise available. Moreover, EED will tap and coordinate the many EPA programs and labs that are developing environmental education concepts and products. Great care must be taken to ensure that educational efforts are non-duplicative, cost-effective, well produced, and necessary. The following formal groups are now in place and working with EED to forge new directions for future environmental education initiatives. EED will form additional lines of communication and new advisory groups with expertise in specific areas as the need arises.

Activities

• **EPA Environmental Education Advisory Board:** The EED established an internal EPA advisory board to provide a network for headquarters, regional offices, and research laboratories across the country. The Advisory Board facilitates coordination of EPA's national, regional, and local educational activities such as awarding grants, developing and disseminating educational materials, conducting teacher training, and promoting environmental careers through student internships, research fellowships, and course and seminar development.

• **Federal Task Force on Environmental Education:** The EED established a network with 15 other Federal agencies involved in environmental education to facilitate communication within the Federal Government and to foster interagency collaboration on specific projects. This Task Force is chaired by EPA and includes members from the Departments of Education, Interior, Agriculture, Energy, State, Health and Human Services, and Defense, as well as from the Council on Environmental Quality, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Science Foundation, Tennessee Valley Authority, Agency for International Development, U.S. Information Agency, and the Peace Corps.

• **National Environmental Education Advisory Council:** The EED convened an 11-member Advisory Council representing a wide variety of interests outside of the Federal Government. The Advisory Council includes members from various geographic areas, minority groups, and various interests such as academia, non-profit groups, and the private sector. This Advisory Council will provide advice and recommendations to the Administrator regarding the implementation of the Act. Moreover, as specified in the Act, it will prepare a biennial report to Congress to assess and improve the overall extent and quality of environmental education in the Nation.

• **Pollution Prevention Advisory Group:** An advisory group was established to provide guidance and direction on the development of pollution prevention educational materials and the teacher training necessary to ensure effective use of the materials. This advisory group is comprised of 20 members with expertise in the areas of education, publishing, communications, minority concerns, and the environment. Meetings will occur as necessary for successful completion of the Pollution Prevention Environmental Education Project which is further described under Goal 2, Educate Our Youth.

STRATEGY B: Develop Public and Private Partnerships to Increase Effectiveness and to Maximize Use of Limited Resources.

The environmental education community needs to expand its horizons and form new coalitions and cooperative ventures with other groups and organizations, including those not traditionally included in the environmental education arena, such as industry, religious groups, and senior citizen associations. EED places a high priority on expanding communication networks and on developing partnerships—especially at the "grassroots" level to ensure that environmental education is responsive to local needs. There are existing gaps in environmental education that allow not only students, but members of specific adult populations, to lack knowledge of important environmental issues and solutions to problems. Through extensive communication and cooperation between EED and EPA Regional Offices and among the Regional offices and State and local agencies, EPA anticipates closing the gaps.

Activities

The following lists some of the types of partnerships now in place and describes the type of partnerships the EED will pursue in the future in an effort to identify and fill gaps in environmental education:

Partnerships with a Focus on Youth

As described in detail below under Goal 2, educating our youth is an absolutely essential goal of the EED. Many consider raising the environmental literacy and consciousness of school children the primary purpose of the authorizing legislation that established the EED. Therefore, considerable effort has been and will be dedicated to establishing partnerships with organizations serving the young, such as the Boy Scouts of America and the National Future Farmers of America Organization. The EED will continue to seek additional avenues for reaching children and promoting new partnerships to leverage and expand successful youth programs. Emphasis will be placed on forming partnerships with organizations that serve inner city youths and other groups with special needs.

Partnerships with Environmental Groups

Environmental groups have the qualifications and experience to be of considerable assistance to EED in establishing innovative and effective educational programs and activities. EED will work closely with all interested environmental organizations to ensure that the office stays on the cutting edge of environmental trends.

Partnerships with Federal/State/Local Governments

Many state and local governments, as well as Federal agencies, already have excellent environmental education programs in place that can be duplicated or serve as examples for other locales. It is in the best interest of all parties for EED to collaborate with government at all levels to disperse information, reinforce consistent messages, and minimize duplication of effort.

Partnerships with Academia

Liaisons with colleges and universities, as well as with professional education associations, will be established wherever feasible to ensure that EED stays abreast of research and innovative methods of environmental education. Funding for endeavors at these institutions is also an important responsibility of EED that is addressed below.

Partnerships with Health Organizations

Increased educational efforts will be made to reduce health problems that are associated with environmental factors, such as lead poisoning. Such educational efforts will be emphasized in urban areas and will ensure that environmental equity issues are addressed. There is a need to target segments of the population that are not now being reached such as minority and multiethnic communities, senior citizens, and the illiterate public. EED will form partnerships with all willing public, private, and tribal health organizations and will attempt to reach all segments of the population with environmental education—especially as it relates to health issues.

Partnerships with Businesses

In recent years, a number of corporations have contacted EPA to offer their services and funding for awards, certificates, and the development of educational materials such as videos, posters, and pilot educational projects. Past collaborations have been very successful and the EED, with the assistance of the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, will embark upon new partnerships where feasible and appropriate.

Partnerships with Senior Citizen Groups

Senior citizens often have the time and freedom available for the pursuit of activities which are of benefit to their communities. The EED will contact organizations for senior citizens, especially retired educators, to enlist their support in carrying out environmental education projects that reach all age groups and all segments of communities.

STRATEGY C: Provide Grants for Model of Excellence in Environmental Education.

Primarily through its grants program, the EED will leverage its resources by funding models of excellence in environmental education. The projects funded are innovative grassroots-level programs and projects developed by schools, universities, state/local/tribal education agencies, and non-profit organizations. Although some projects may be national in scope, the majority of projects funded will respond to regional, state, and local needs. EED discovered in its first year of issuing grants that if unlimited funding were available, it would be possible to enter into thousands of partnerships to support very effective environmental education projects. In 1992, the first solicitation for proposals resulted in over 3,000 applications that requested over $100 million in funding. Such tremendous response to the environmental education grants process demonstrated the significant nationwide concern for improved environmental education. In 1992, EED and the regional offices awarded $2.4 million for environmental education grants and the amount awarded in 1993 was increased to $2.7 million. Since only a small fraction of the amount requested in grant applications is currently available to EED, working to acquire increased funding in future years to support high-quality environmental education efforts is a major EED priority.

Activities

• Environmental Education Grants: During 1993, funds for over 260 individual grants, from less than $500 to $250,000, were awarded for environmental education projects around the country. These grants stimulate environmental education by supporting projects that design, demonstrate, or disseminate innovative practices and techniques of environmental education. These grants are used both to develop new programs and to improve significantly the quality of existing programs. Some funded projects focus on specific issues such as water, air, pollution prevention, and solid waste management; others emphasize holistic education either locally or globally. The projects include a wide variety of approaches from community and watershed cleanup to computer games. Selection criteria for grants vary by year and have included: innovativeness, ability to be replicated in other communities or regions, effectiveness in addressing high priority environmental issues and problems, and closing gaps in environmental education. EED annually issues a solicitation in the Federal Register for new grant applications.

GOAL 2: Educate and Motivate Youth to Protect and Preserve Our Environment.

STRATEGY A: Increase the Number of Teachers that Infuse Environmental Education into Existing Curricula.

Section 2(b) of the Act states: "It is the policy of the United States to establish and support a program of education on the environment, for students and personnel working with students, through activities in schools, institutions of higher education, and related educational activities..." Due to the significance of the task of educating our youth, EED will place maximum emphasis on supporting the development of training programs and materials to promote environmental education in schools. The importance of providing teachers with the information necessary to skillfully include environmental education in their classroom activities cannot be overstated. All interested teachers must be given an opportunity to feel comfortable with their command of environmental issues. Special efforts will be made to ensure that all teachers, including those in nonscientific fields, are provided the opportunity to receive training and access to appropriate materials that allow the infusion of environmental education into all curricula.

Activities

- **Teacher Training Grant:** EPA awarded a $1.6 million grant in 1992 for the development and operation of a national environmental education and training program. This initial grant was awarded to a consortium of academic institutions, corporations, and non-profit organizations headed by the University of Michigan. The program under development will target in-service teachers (K-12 grade), as well as non-formal educators. It includes curriculum evaluation and needs assessment, teacher training, and information dissemination. EPA expects to fund this program for a three-year period, subject to Congressional appropriations and the program's ability to meet the goals of the Act.

- **Pollution Prevention Environmental Education Project:** Resource materials stressing pollution prevention are being developed by a nationwide EPA Pollution Prevention Task Force. These materials were designed for grades K-12, with guidance from the advisory group described under Goal 1, and with input from teachers and environmental experts. This project complements the above-described grant program and will be of use in the teacher training process designed by the consortium.

STRATEGY B: Provide Educators with Access to Quality Environmental Education Materials.

The EED emphasis will be on the identification of excellence in existing environmental education material, rather than on the production of new materials. Many professional educators and environmentalists agree that a vast quantity of environmental education materials exists, but quality varies widely and finding appropriate materials is often difficult. EPA will use the latest technology to categorize and provide access to the best materials available. Efforts underway include the following:

Activities

- **Environmental Education Resource Library:** To facilitate information exchange, EED is working with educational agencies and institutions to develop an interactive, computer-based system for environmental education materials. This Environmental Education Resource Library (EERL) will contain a wide range of educational information from many sources such as EPA, other Federal agencies, and non-profit organizations. Although EERL will also be available for other purposes, it is designed for educators (K-12th grade). During the 1992-93 school year, a demonstration model of EERL was reviewed and evaluated by selected organizations and institutions. EED anticipates the distribution of EERL computer disks to targeted users during the 1993-1994 school year.

- **Earth Notes:** EED produces a periodical that contains innovative ideas from educators (K-6) about their first-hand experiences in bringing environmental education into the classroom. The periodical provides an open forum for the exchange of teaching ideas, comments, and brief essays concerning environmental education in the elementary grades.

GOAL 3: Promote the Pursuit of Environmental Careers.

STRATEGY A: Support Students in the Environmental Field.

Section 2(b) of the Act states that it is the policy of the United States to encourage post-secondary students to pursue careers related to the environment. Moreover, as the public becomes more aware of global environmental problems, EPA and other agencies will have to respond with high quality research. The EED must ensure an increase in the supply of world-class scientists, engineers, and other professionals who can develop innovative and preventive solutions to environmental problems. In pursuing Goal 3, the EED will enhance the "America 2000" education strategy to make U.S. students the first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Activities

- **National Network for Environmental Management Studies (NNEMS):** EED administers the NNEMS program to encourage post-secondary students in all academic disciplines to pursue environmental careers. This program provides students from participating universities with the opportunity either to work on a specific project with environmental professionals at EPA, or to conduct environmental research directed by EPA at their university. EED is working with other Federal agencies to determine the need for expanding this program to other agencies.

- **Minority Recruitment:** Plans are underway for EED to assume responsibility for a scholarship program for residents of Indian reservations. The EED will also place special emphasis on working with EPA's Office of Environmental Equity to find additional ways to reach minority students and to encourage their participation in degree programs and internships that lead to environmental careers. In addition, EED participates in EPA's Academic Relations Program which targets minority academic institutions for environmental science and engineering training and recruitment.

STRATEGY B: Honor Achievements that Benefit the Environment.

The EED will sponsor award programs that demonstrate the value and importance of careers benefitting the environment. Awards not only honor achievements of the recipients and promote positive role models, they also generate media attention and create awareness of environmental issues in the general public. Each of these processes encourages interest in environmental careers.

Activities

- **President's Environmental Youth Awards (PEYA):** Young people in all fifty states compete in this program to honor outstanding commitment to the environment. National award winners are selected by each EPA regional office and are invited to participate in a recognition program in Washington, D.C. The President and EPA Administrator usually host a White House ceremony to honor the 10 annual award winners.

- **National Environmental Education Awards:** EED has established a new biennial awards program to recognize individuals for their outstanding contributions to environmental education. The awards, which commemorate Theodore Roosevelt, Henry David Thoreau, Rachel Carson, and Gifford Pinchot, are given for teaching; literature; print, film, or broadcast media; and forestry and natural resource management.

GOAL 4: Develop an Environmentally Conscious and Responsible Public.

STRATEGY A: Educate the General Public.

To reach the general public, EPA will improve its ability to clearly communicate complex scientific and technical information. Comprehensible information is necessary to help people recognize risks and understand the relative seriousness of environmental problems. EPA will also expand efforts to "listen" to the voice of the general public. EED will work to develop public awareness about sustainable development, pollution prevention, and the economic realities of shrinking supplies of natural resources and growing costs of waste disposal. Most importantly, in addition to raising the public's basic awareness level, the EED must also enable people to make informed decisions to preserve and improve the environment.

Activities

• **Media Strategy:** The EED will develop a comprehensive media strategy to reach the general public with a consistent set of environmental themes and information about specific actions the public can take to make a difference. To ensure reinforcement and comprehension of the messages, the number of issues publicized nationally will be limited to two or three at a time. EED will confer with its Advisory Groups/Partners to determine which issues to focus upon first.

• **Publicity:** To promote these environmental themes, the EED will enlist support from every type of media—such as the press, television, and radio. Support will also be solicited from all of the partners, especially other Federal agencies, to ensure the infusion of consistent environmental education messages into existing policies and programs in government, business, and academia.

• **Environmental Equity:** The EED will make special efforts to target segments of the population not currently being reached—such as multiethnic communities and senior citizens.

STRATEGY B: Use EPA's Evaluation of the Nation's Environmental Literacy to Improve Educational Strategies.

As environmental education efforts proliferate, there is an increased need to evaluate the effectiveness of the various educational methods in use. Basic research into methodologies, and the documentation of successes and failures, are necessary to develop additional support for environmental education and to ensure that programs are conceptually sound. Other Offices in EPA will develop a system to measure the general public's knowledge about specific environmental issues. EED will study the results to ascertain where changes are needed in the goals and strategies the office is pursuing.

GOAL 5: Reach Across International Boundaries.

STRATEGY A: Work Closely with Canada and Mexico

EED recognizes that environmental problems transcend national boundaries and the United States does not have a monopoly on effective ways to educate the public about environmental issues and problems. Therefore, protecting human health and the environment in the United States requires coordination and cooperation at the multinational level. Reaching out internationally for information exchanges and joint training ventures, especially with Canada and Mexico, will be an EED priority.

Activities

• **Trilateral MOU on Environmental Education:** In collaboration with the EPA's Office of International Activities, EED developed a memorandum of understanding with the governments of Canada and Mexico to promote environmental education on the North American continent. Specific activities in the Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Education include information exchanges of education and training policies, educational approaches, and materials; support and participation in seminars, workshops, and conferences; and trilateral initiatives or projects involving youth.

STRATEGY B: Form Partnerships Worldwide Where Feasible.

EED and EPA's Office of International Activities now have efforts underway to launch or support various environmental education initiatives around the world. EED will continue to form partnerships to improve international environmental education wherever possible. Some highlights of projects underway are:

• **Fulbright Fellowships:** In collaboration with the U.S. Information Agency, EPA is fostering the development of discipline-specific Fulbright Fellowships for senior research scholars in environmental research and education from the Near Eastern, North African, and South Asian regions. The program is expected to allow senior scholars to apply for a nine-month to one-year grant from an institution of higher education.

• **Public-Private Initiatives:** EPA is supporting several public-private initiatives that include environmental education in various regions of the world. The initiatives include the establishment of the following centers: Caribbean Environment and Development Institute (Puerto Rico, 1992), Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (Budapest, Hungary, 1990), and Environmental Education and Information Center (Kiev, Ukraine, 1992).

CONCLUSION

The Environmental Education Division faces a tremendous task. The goals and strategies laid out in this brochure will serve well to support a successful and effective program to implement the National Environmental Education Act. Relying on the good counsel of our internal and external partners, EED will continue to craft a leadership role as envisioned in the Act.

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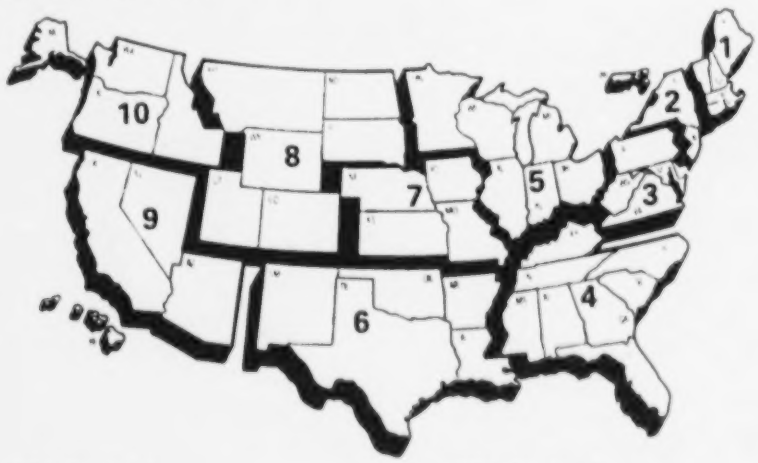
This brochure provides an overview of many Environmental Education Division initiatives. In addition, a great deal of this Agency's environmental education is managed by Environmental Education Coordinators in the Regional Offices. Each of ten EPA Regional Offices creates and conducts its own environmental education projects. For more specific information about the topics listed below, please contact:

EPA Headquarters Activities

EPA Environmental Education Division
401 M Street S.W. (1707)
Washington, DC 20460
Telephone 202-260-4484

EPA Educational Materials
EPA Public Information Center
401 M Street S.W. (3404)
Washington, DC 20460
Telephone 202-260-2080

Regional Office Environmental Education Activities



EPA Region 1
Environmental Education Program
JFK Federal Building
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 565-9447
Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

EPA Region 2
Environmental Education Program
26 Federal Plaza, Room 905
New York, NY 10278
(212) 264-2980
New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

EPA Region 3
Environmental Education Program
841 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 597-9076
Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia

EPA Region 4
Environmental Education Program
345 Courtland Street, NE
Atlanta, GA 30365
(404) 347-3004
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee

EPA Region 5
Environmental Education Program
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 353-3209
Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

EPA Region 6
Environmental Education Program
1445 Ross Avenue
Dallas, TX 75202
(214) 655-2204
Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

EPA Region 7
Environmental Education Program
726 Minnesota Avenue
Kansas City, KS 66101
(913) 551-7003
Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska

EPA Region 8
Environmental Education Program
One Denver Place, Suite 500
999 18th Street
Denver, CO 80202-2405
(303) 294-1113
Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

EPA Region 9
Environmental Education Program
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 744-1581
Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, American Samoa, Guam, Trust Territories of the Pacific

EPA Region 10
Environmental Education Program
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 553-1207
Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington

United States
Environmental Protection Agency
Environmental Education Division (1707)
401 M Street SW
Washington, DC 20460

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